

## **AVOID RED FLAG WORDS**



### **Reason for leaving your last job**

Certain words, such as “fired, quit, personal reasons” all raise red flags with employers. There are other words to use that are much more effective and positive to explain why you are no longer at your last job.

For example, instead of “fired,” you might write “Involuntary separation, or “will discuss at interview.” If you quit a job, you may want to write “resigned” or “voluntary separation.” If you have just been released from jail, some appropriate terms could be “relocated,” “contract ended,” or “temporary situation ended.”



## **GENERAL TIPS FOR COMPLETING JOB APPLICATIONS:**

1. Write a good “general” application with all dates, work history and references. Make a copy to carry with you for easy reference when completing other applications.
2. Use a computer when possible. If you write it out, use a black pen, and write or print neatly. Neatness counts.
3. Answer each question. If the question does not apply to you, write “na.” Don't just leave it blank. The employer may think you have overlooked it.
4. If you do not have a phone, provide a message number of someone dependable, and someone who can easily contact you.
5. If you lack work experience, be creative (but honest). List any volunteer work or life experiences related to the skills needed for the job.
6. Note your education, whether it is a college education, high school diploma, GED, or the fact that you are working toward your GED. (Be sure to list the date you expect to complete your GED.)
7. Be sure to sign and date the application. Most unsigned applications are automatically rejected.
8. Write “will discuss at interview” if you have something you prefer to explain in person, such as a felony conviction, or having been fired from a job.
9. Attach a copy of your resume to the application.
10. Avoid using abbreviations that not everyone may be familiar with.

## **HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CONVICTED OF A FELONY?**

### **Tips for Completing an Effective Job Application**

**(Even if your past is not so hot)**



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## Focus on Applying for Appropriate Jobs

While employers cannot discriminate against individuals *solely* on the basis of their criminal record, they can refuse to hire you if they can show that your background may negatively affect their workplace and/or business. Several federal laws specify certain occupations that are “off limits,” or restricted, for individuals with various types of criminal convictions, and certain jobs require mandatory criminal background checks for public safety purposes. For instance:

- Financial institutions insured by the FDIC (banks), especially if your conviction involved dishonesty, embezzling, credit card fraud or money laundering.
- Health care services and the pharmaceutical industry (for certain types of crimes.)
- Child care providers or other services involving children.
- Aviation jobs
- Law enforcement and other positions in the criminal justice field

State and city governments may have additional restrictions on certain occupations, such as driving a bus or taxi. Most states prohibit ex-offenders from acquiring certain professional licenses and vocational certifications. You should inquire about any restrictions *before* applying for a specific job, and *before* pursuing training, education or certification in a specific field.

## Tips For Completing an Effective Job Application

Dealing with potential employers is never an easy task for anyone. If you have a criminal record, it becomes even more difficult. Ex-offenders who are not truthful on the application may get hired, but there is a very real chance they will get fired if their record becomes known. Those who are honest may feel like they never get a chance. Here are some common questions you may find on job applications, along with some helpful hints for responding.

### Have you ever been convicted of a felony?

Bear in mind the employer is interested only in *felony* convictions—not *misdemeanors*.

You can honestly answer “no” without further explanation if you have been charged with a felony but have not yet gone to trial or been found guilty. You may also answer “no” if you were charged with a felony and found not guilty of the charge.

If you have a felony conviction, we recommend simply answering “yes” and writing, “*Will discuss at interview.*”

### Include all previous employers and what type of work you did.

Be honest about your experience and qualifications—even if your experience was obtained while in prison. It’s easier to explain the situation than it is to explain a major gap in employment. If you learned to cook in prison, you can legitimately write “cook” and explain that you can make tasty meals for large groups. Go on to explain what equipment you used and how long you worked in the kitchen.



Since you are usually asked to include the name of the employer, the city and state, and the title of your employment, in the case above, you might note that your job title was “cook,” your employer was “State of Montana,” and you worked from “1999-2001.”

Remember, you are not trying to fool an employer or hide the truth. The objective is to demonstrate your abilities so you may obtain an interview—at which time you can discuss the details with your prospective employer.

**If you need any assistance with completing your application, please feel free to visit with any of our staff.**

**Our services are offered at no cost to you.**